

# how to grow tomatoes

## Planting

It usually takes around 8-10 weeks before you are harvesting tomatoes after planting, so if you plant mid to late October you should be picking by Christmas (weather dependent).

### Tips for Planting Tomatoes

- 1 Choosing the right site for tomatoes is crucial. A north facing site is ideal as they grow better in a sunny location – the more sun the better tasting the tomato is.
- 2 Tomatoes don't like strong winds and require shelter, but air circulation is important to help discourage disease. So when planting make sure it's not an extremely windy position.
- 3 Soil preparation is imperative for growing healthy tomato plants and in turn a bountiful crop. Before planting, prepare soil by digging in plenty of **Daltons Enriched Compost**; this will add nutrients into the soil and help with moisture retention. Avoid planting tomatoes in heavy/clay or wet soils as they will not grow well – if you do have this type of soil you will need to add extra compost as well as **Daltons Garden Time<sup>TM</sup> Tomato Mix** or **Daltons Garden Time<sup>TM</sup> Tomato Mix** to help with drainage.
- 4 Put your support stakes or structures in place before you plant your young plants so you do not disturb the plants root system later on. A good trick is to recycle old pantyhose and use them to tie plants to support structures – they are soft so won't damage the stem.
- 5 Spacing for ordinary varieties is approximately 60-70cm between plants, grafted varieties do require more room to grow so plant them at least a metre apart.
- 6 It's important to always have a good layer of mulch around your plants, especially in the summer months, to retain moisture, add nutrition and suppress weeds.
- 7 At the end of the season it is best practice to dig up plants and remove from the property in case they are harbouring pests or diseases which could re-infect your garden next season.
- 8 Crop rotation – Growing tomatoes in the same position each year depletes the soil of specific nutrients the plant needs to grow well. It's best to change their position in the garden next season. However if you have a lack of space in your garden, you can overcome the problem by introducing extra of organic matter such as compost to replace the depleted nutrients.



## Growing in Pots

If you have limited space, don't despair, tomatoes can be successfully grown in pots and containers. Just be sure the container is big enough – at least the size of half a wine barrel or the equivalent. Tomatoes need these larger containers because they can dry out quickly in smaller containers, and the plants can struggle to get enough nutrients to develop healthy fruit. Use **Daltons Garden Time<sup>TM</sup> Tomato Mix** or **Daltons Garden Time<sup>TM</sup> Tomato Mix** which has the correct slow release of nutrients and also helps with water retention.

It's not as easy to stake plants in containers so consider growing shorter more compact varieties such as Roma, or try bush or dwarf varieties like Russian Red.

## Choosing the Right Variety

There's nothing like a juicy red tomato and they taste even better out of your own garden. There are numerous varieties available to suit your tastes and garden. When purchasing tomatoes, selection of the plant is important. Always choose vigorous healthy looking young plants and look out for disease resistant varieties like Mortgage Lifter or Tommy Toe.

### Categories of Tomatoes

- **Acid free**  
Roma
- **Large eating varieties**  
Beef Steak or Money Maker
- **Miniatures**  
Cherry tomatoes
- **Grafted tomatoes**  
Many varieties available
- **Heirloom**  
For something a little different...  
try black, yellow or green varieties
- **Dwarf**  
Russian Red – don't require staking



## Feeding and Watering

Tomatoes require a lot of water, especially around fruiting time. The key is to be consistent and give them a deep watering three times a week – water until they puddle at the base around your mulch, as this indicates water holding capacity has been reached in the soil.

Soil should be kept moist but not wet. Always only water the roots, and avoid getting the leaves wet, as this can encourage fungal diseases.

## Feeding Schedule

For strong healthy plants and a bumper crop, feed your tomatoes every 3-4 weeks throughout the growing period with **Daltons Garden Time™ Tomato Fertiliser**.

## Regional Tips

Tomato planting times depend on where you live. For most of the country the best time to plant out is around Labour Weekend (late October), but those in warmer Northern regions can plant tomatoes from early October. Tomatoes can be grown earlier under cloches, or raised in a sheltered spot in pots – just ensure you protect them from any potential frosts.

## Professional tips with Xanthe White

“Tomatoes require plenty of nutrition and water. It is very important to water regularly during the summer dry months. Mulching is an excellent way of conserving moisture in summer. Once the small fruit appear on your plants apply an application of **Daltons Garden Time™ Tomato Fertiliser** and water in well.”



## Pests and Diseases

- Tomatoes are susceptible to many pests and diseases. Soil preparation, crop rotation, good ventilation between plants, and a well timed spraying and feeding programme are crucial.
- Blight ('early' or 'late') is a common fungal disease during warm wet summers. Late blight occurs later in the season as humidity and temperatures increase, causing wilting, dark spots followed by leaf drop. At first sign of disease, during warm wet weather periods, spray regularly (every 10-14 days) with Copper. Remove and dispose of infected leaves and plants – keeping them out of your compost bin to ensure they do not re-infect your garden.
- White fly and green shield bugs love tomato plants. Treat them with Neem oil – it can be mixed into a spray and easily applied.
- Diseases can enter the plant via freshly pruned areas or where the plant is rubbing against a stake – to be safe you can apply Copper spray as a deterrent.



## General Maintenance

Laterals are shoots that appear between the junction of a leaf and the stem. You want to create a nice strong tomato plant with a good structure so remove laterals from the stems up to at least one metre from the ground and keep removing them regularly until the plant is around 1.3-1.4 metres tall. Use sharp secateurs and ensure they are clean before you start.

## Gardening Terms Explained

- **Heirloom** – These are open pollinated (non hybrid) varieties often known for great flavour and long harvest.
- **Hybrid tomatoes** – these are a cross between two types of tomatoes that are genetically different. They are designed to have the best of both plants.
- **Laterals** – shoots that appear between the junction of a leaf and the stem.



## Products to try

Daltons Garden Time™ Tomato Mix | Daltons Enriched Compost  
Daltons Mulch & Grow | Daltons Garden Time™ Tomato Fertiliser